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Figures in JFK Tragedy Still Around Dallas

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DALLAS—The assassination of John F. Kennedy brought unearned fame to as varied a collection of human beings as were ever engulfed in a national tragedy.

Five years later, these figures from history's periphery remain in or near Dallas, five years after the terrible events of Nov. 22, 1963.

Pretty Marina Oswald, the 27-year-old widow of the assassin, has lost her image as the poor little Russian girl—mainly because she's gotten rich. Pitying well-wishers from all over the world have sent her more than $70,000, and she has grossed at least $60,000 more by sales of pictures, interviews, her husband's diary and the rifle with which he shot the President.

Writing a Book

Currently, she is suing to make the Government pay her $500,000 for Oswald's clothes, books and other personal trivia. And she is writing a book which—if ever finished—should become an automatic world best-seller.

Still, Marina seems not to have found happiness. Her second marriage — to a bartender named Kenneth Jess Porter—has been stormy. On one occasion she took her husband to court, charging he had threatened to shoot her. His defense was an attack: he did it, he said, because she left the children—Oswald's two girls and their own baby boy—and was drinking beer at a neighbor's house.

That quarrel was straightened out, but other rather public ones followed, principally over barmaids at the tavern she purchased for her husband.

The police no longer keep track of the callers at her $25,000 three-bedroom house, but this hasn't made her relations with neighbors much easier. "She doesn't mix much," says one who occasionally has coffee with Marina. "She acts like she doesn't trust anybody and I guess you'd say the feeling was mutual."

Mother of Assassin

In nearby Fort Worth, Marguerite Oswald, mother of the assassin, lives in circumstances considerably improved since her son's death.

Better dressed and housed, noticeably slimmer, she recently summoned a press

MRS. J. D. TIPPIT
. . . widow remarried.

sor in proving her son's innocence.

Still a formidable saleswoman, Marguerite has auctioned off letters, clothes, school pictures and many other possessions of her son's, but always, she says, to finance her investigations.

Some day she may sell the very tombstone of Lee's grave.

"If it was necessary to sell the stone to continue my work, then I'd do it," she says. "After all, I have to survive."

'It Belongs to Me'

"I've just had an offer for it," she calmly explained, "and the way I figure, it belongs to me, not to that tramp."

Even for a mother-in-law, even for a former mother-in-law, Marguerite's view of Marina seems harsh. Once she turned up at the office of Marina's lawyer to demand the belt Oswald was wearing when captured.

No happy endings seem in sight, either, for the third widow in the case, Marie Tippit, whose husband was the Dallas police officer shot to death while questioning Oswald. She, too, has become a wealthy woman since the tragedy.

Some $700,000 was sent to her by sympathetic Americans, and it has been split among her three children and herself and invested in trust funds now worth more than $1 million.

But the Tippit house remains as modest as ever, with the furniture as shabby as it was five years ago. She still goes to the same beauty shop, where she and her teen-aged daughter get their hair washed and then go home to apply a Toni.

And the Dallas police, who rallied to her after the assassination, were miffed

Marie had one rather unpleasant meeting with still another widow in the case—Helen Markham who witnessed the shooting of Tippit, was first to his side and cradled the dying officer's head in her arms.

"She acted like she thought she was better than me," says Helen. "Guess that's what money does to some people. She got real snotty once and asked me if I knew her husband before. That really teed me off—and I told her so."

Married to Blind Man

Helen Markham is one key peripheral figure in the assassination who has not improved herself financially. Now married to a blind man who operates a concession stand in a Dallas post office, she's still a

HELEN MARKHAM
. . . no better off.

lunchroom waitress, still struggling to bring up her five children, still without a phone or an automobile. Yet she has refused several chances to sell personal belongings—including the subpoena that ordered her to Washington.

"I've always made an honest living for my family and, God willing, that's the way it'll continue," she says. "I don't want no part of that kind of money."

Oswald was captured by police in a movie house. First to reach him was Patrolman N. M. McDonald, who was subsequently promoted to detective. His salary has increased from $485 to $812 per month, though otherwise he has gone unrewarded—except for a free lifetime membership in the local Playboy Club.

But McDonald's fellow officers, who helped him wrestle Oswald into submission, still resent the fact

MARGUERITE OSWALD
. . . sells memorabilia.

that he alone was singled out as the assassin's captor. In fact, five Dallas policemen went so far as to seek a lawyer to find out what could be done legally to get some of the credit.

Memento of Capture

McDonald, now 40 and still bearing a thin, two-inch scar on his cheek as a memento of the capture, shrugs off the attitude of his brother officers. "I just let it ride," he says.

Ruth Paine, 36, the gentle Quaker lady who shared her house with Marina and the children at the time of the assassination, has not seen them "in three or four years . . . It became clear to me that she did not want to keep up the friendship."

Reunited wih her husband—from whom she was separated in 1963 — she now teaches pre-schoolers in an interracial Montessori school. The knowledge of Russian, acquired during

MARINA OSWALD PORTER
. . . has gotten rich.

long chats with lonely Marina five years ago, is slipping away.

"I'm thinking of taking up Spanish," she says. "Perhaps I should have done that in the first place."